651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda
[538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

224 Each village goes there in a group, burning the bush and driving on the game. If the plan is carried out properly, the animals are eventually enclosed within a circle of fire behind which stand the natives, some on horseback and armed with spears, others on foot with their dogs and equipped merely with sticks or sometimes with bows and arrows. The bows are of medium size and made of hard wood. The 411 224 string is usually made from a rattan stem or a millet stalk. Arrows are made of the tough and light stems of tall reeds; they are not barbed, but the tip is made of iron and shaped like a harpoon, with two and sometimes three pairs of teeth. The leather quiver hangs from the shoulder.

224 The panic-stricken hares, deer, antelope of various kinds, guinea hens, and partridges run all around the fiery circle, and those who manage to cross this first obstacle are felled by the blows of the hunters. These hunts are sometimes quite fruitful, and buffalo and koba are 224 occasionally caught. Unfortunately, every animal killed in the bush 661 belongs by right to the naba, who searches the hunters' bags and takes what he pleases. If he learns that a lucky hunter has killed an antelope and failed to bring it, he summons him to his presence, reproves him harshly for his lack of consideration, and thrashes him soundly. It must nevertheless be said that such cases are constantly growing rarer, and now the natives flatly refuse to yield their catch.

224 Often no game is caught because one of the villages has failed to appear and the animals have fled through the unguarded opening. In short, these hunting parties are mostly a pastime and entertainment. The hunters who bring back a catch are few, owing to the large number of men who participate. It is true that when they set out for the hunt they all hope they will be lucky. They all are thirsty, for at this time of year the sun is very hot and it is better to hunt in the middle of the day when the game lies down in the bushes and cannot run very far. These hunting parties dwindle year by year. The cultivated fields are more extensive, and the game has withdrawn deeper into the bush. Also, the natives find it more difficult to reaching an agreement for large parties of beaters; /51/ they prefer to hunt in small groups, far from the chiefs' sight, so that nothing will be taken from them.

226 In addition to hunting, fishing is the great pastime at this time of year. Professional fishermen are as rare as professional hunters. Of course, those who live on the banks of streams usually know how to [48] swim, especially when they live near those watercourses which are most difficult to ford.

[Dec, February - April. - Analyst]

226 most difficult to ford. Each watercourse, or more exactly each pond, [423 558] belongs to a naba and bears a special name, so no river has the same name name all along its course. During the dry season the lelek /bed?/ of the watercourses is usually dry. Here and there are to be found ponds of varying depth where the cattle is watered. These ponds are where the natives fish. They wait until the water level subsides to knee height, for otherwise fishing would be too difficult.

226 227 The fishing gear is as crude as the hunting gear. There is a small net held open by three sticks forming a triangle and crossed by a tough stick that is held in the hand, quite similar to the spoon-nets we use to gather shrimp. Above all a sort of wicker trap is used, conical in shape, open at the base and closed at the tip with a movable lid. This trap sometimes contains a second one made of very flexible sticks that are attached to the base of the first one. The two traps thus have a common base, but the second one opens within the first. The fish enters the trap and is held by the sticks of the smaller cone, which close in as the fish tries to get out. The fisherman removes the trap from the water or leaves it sunk in the mud, opens the lid, plunges in his hand and removes the fish, which is confined and easy to seize. The fisherman then puts it in a net or in a leather bag.

226 825 On a set date the owner of the pond offers sacrifices to the crocodiles so they will not bite anybody. This is why the naba of Koupéla, before he fishes in his pond, must sacrifice a black goat and a chicken. No one may kill a crocodile while fishing, or the naba will die before the year is over. Was not a crocodile killed in his father's pond on [789] the very year when he died? Before they go fishing, the natives make charms by burning roots and tree bark inside their traps. If the charm is good, the fish will rush headlong into the net or trap.

226 The fishermen gather at one end of the pond. They stand in a row across the water and move slowly forward while dipping their nets and traps over and over again. All the fish caught are put in bags or tossed to friends who stand on the shore, but, as during the hunt, the naba takes an ample share and seizes the finest specimens. The ponds hold mostly silurids anyway, which like mud and retain its odor and taste even when cooked. The Volta rivers, on the other hand, contain more abundant and more varied fish. /52/ When the natives have crossed and recrossed the pond several times, only small fry remain, and everyone goes home glad to have a little fish for the sauce and especially to have escaped the teeth of the crocodiles, for in spite of

226 the sacrifices, these amphibians have no scruples about biting a foot or leg. However, the crocodiles in these ponds are seldom large enough to sever a limb.

In those places where the water is somewhat shallow and flows for some period of time, the bank dwellers make dams of tree branches intertwined with millet stalks. These are placed diagonally to the current and lead to a sort of funnel closed with a net. The fish follow the dam, enter the funnel, and get caught in the meshes of the net.

221 356 The major ceremonies also take place at this time of year.[1] This is when the Day of the Dead is celebrated, when the koure is held. When the first gust of wind unroofs a few huts or at least indicates those that need a new covering, everyone sets down to the task. The thatch cut in December is used for the purpose. Before the soukala, [283] [857] children and youths knot blades of straw with strings of hemp and plait séko. They also go into the bush to cut down branches and to gather bark which serves to bind the branches together. When everything is ready, the head of the household calls his people and gathers a few neighbors. The roof is made and laid within a short morning. This task must be repeated every two years or so, and it is men's work entirely. At the beginning of winter, the villages take on a smart 221 new look. This is when people think of building a new hut, the man who has acquired a new wife, the child who has grown into a young man and who can no longer live with his mother, the man whose wealth has increased by a few head of cattle or a horse. The women fetch water, the children knead the mortar with their feet and carry to the mason the mud clods prepared by the old men. These tasks are not laborious, and they are accomplished with merrymaking.

Now the thorn bushes have grown back, the rains will soon fall again, and already a few gusts of wind herald the coming winter. The Pleiades have appeared on the horizon, and the baobabs are budding once more. It is necessary to take up the hoe again and to sow; this is a good thing, because the millet is running low in the granaries. The working cycle we have described must begin anew. And year follows year without bringing any major changes in the life of the common man.

[1] [i.e., February-April. -Analyst]

224 435 At Kombisiguiri, as we have just seen, there are 10 elephant hunters out of about 70 chiefs of compounds. Among the latter there are also some 20 men who hunt other animals, but they are cultivators who hunt on the side. They seek buffalo. When they kill one, they sell the meat to the village that stands nearest to the spot of the kill for 35,000 cowries. They also hunt the koba antelope, whose meat is worth from 20,000 cowries, the striped deer worth 6,500, the pig deer worth 5,000, the wart hog worth 10,000. They also hunt hares, bustards, guinea fowl, partridges, turtle-doves, etc.

224 262 The Mossi do not hunt monkeys and do not eat them. /495/ Actually, there are very few in Mossi territory, except for the red-haired monkeys who are great lovers of millet and maize.

224 825 778 The Mossi do not hunt crocodiles because the latter are held sacred. If one were to kill a crocodile, one would become ill, one's head would swell and one's teeth would fall out. Snakes, on the other hand, are killed and eaten, but in Mossi territory proper there are few large ones (pythons, boas) because the climate is not sufficiently humid. They are more numerous in Boussansé and Gourounsi lands.

● 226 Fishing is less important than hunting among the Mossi, for the simple reason that the land, with its low rainfall, only has muddy ponds during the dry season (on this subject, see our Introduction /not translated/). Thus, not only do the Mossi lack professional fishermen, but the villages do not even undertake collective fishing during the dry season (with the exception of some southern localities, in Kombisiguiri for example). Only children attempt to catch the mudfish which are always present in large quantities in small ponds, even when they are nearly dry.

222 Gathering, on the other hand, plays the same role among the Mossi as among the other Sudanese Blacks, and we shall study it here in some detail, since we have only described it in broad outline so far.

222 137 The tree most widespread throughout Mossi territory, and which grows wild, is the karité. Its leaves are a pleasant green, and it is somewhat similar to our Normandy apple tree. Its bark is whitish and made of small juxtaposed quadrilaterals. It is the karité which

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

The district chiefs did not often exercise their rights over fruit trees in the weogho, as the wasteland in their districts was called. If a villager went into the weogho and collected fruit or wood from the chief's trees, he surrendered only part of it to the chief. On the other hand, if he received permission from a district chief to farm in the weogho, he was obliged to gather and send to the chief the fruit on any valuable trees. A district chief sometimes granted the rights over certain fruit trees in the inhabited areas to specific families or individuals, for personal reasons or as a reward for services. In such cases, the chief forfeited his rights to these trees, but retained his rights to the others.[22]

District chiefs also controlled all the resources of creeks and pools within their jurisdiction that were not sacred to certain aboriginal families, or which had not been transferred to specific persons. The aboriginal Ninisi families always notified the district chief when they planned to perform their annual fishing rite to the earth deities. He, in turn, sent representatives to the ceremony, and they were given part of the catch as his share. Persons who were granted permission to fish in the chief's water holes gave him a substantial part of their catch, and even those persons who had private control of fishing places regularly did the same.

The district chiefs also had rights to certain parts of animals caught in their territories. This applied especially to animals caught with such traditional weapons as traps, clubs, bows and arrows, and spears. Men who had obtained flint guns and other firearms from the Ashanti or elsewhere and who had bought their own powder were not obliged to give the chief a part of their game, but it was always prudent to do so. According to a long-standing tradition, the tusk and legs of a slain elephant that were not resting on the ground belonged to the chief, and those that lay on the ground belonged to the Tengsoba in whose ritual jurisdiction the animal had been slain. But the district chief's secular power was so much stronger than the Tengsoba's sacred power that he usually took both tusks, leaving the Tengsoba only two legs. The district chief also received other portions of elephants and parts of all the larger animals killed in his territory. And when hunters in the district were successful in the chase, they usually gave him entire small animals.

Every village in a district contributed to the district chief's revenue by performing special services for him. Certain villages were responsible for keeping specific huts in his compound in good condition; others, whose lands bordered on the woods, had to provide firewood for his compound; and yet others furnished grass and other fodder for his horses. Many villages had the task of cultivating special fields and crops for the district chief.